



**General Certificate of Education  
June 2011**

**Classical Civilisation 2020**

**CIV4B: Alexander**

***Report on the Examination***

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Set and published by the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance.

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## **CIV4B Alexander**

### **General Comments**

The vast majority of candidates entered for this option showed some degree of knowledge, ranging from adequate to substantial, whilst just a few struggled to demonstrate more than a patchy amount. There was too often a lack of precision in the short answers, although many candidates scored high, or even full, marks. Skills for answering questions carrying 10 marks have improved, the best responses showing a balance between, on the one hand, analysis and evaluation and, on the other, illustrations of knowledge. There was a tendency in less successful 20-mark answers towards either narration of details without robust evaluation or evaluation of a general nature, without illustration. The best 40-mark essays were sophisticated, fully synoptic and packed with relevant detail. Lower down the scale were many competent attempts. A minority of candidates found it difficult to finish well in the limited time available, some doing this question first, sometimes to the detriment of their other answers. Spelling and punctuation were often poor, even by otherwise talented candidates. Overall, nonetheless, virtually all candidates showed some appreciation of what they had studied.

Candidates were divided fairly equally between Options A and B, but in Section Two Option C was by far the more popular choice.

### **Section One**

#### **Option A**

Levels of knowledge varied considerably from question to question in the short answers, both in Option A and in Option B. Answers to Question 01 were rarely extensive or precise enough to earn 3 marks, and for Question 02 what Darius did after he escaped was not well known. The majority of candidates, however, answered Question 03 correctly. Candidates seem to have come to understand the type of response required for a 10-mark question, one which sets off from the stimulus passage and balances factual details with some degree of evaluation. However, command of detail, for example, Darius' actions during the battle, was often sketchy, in Question 04. In this same question, however, most candidates understood the need to write equally about both Arrian's and Plutarch's portrayal of Darius and broadly covered the former's predilection for battle tactics and the latter's concerns as a biographer.

The need to create a strong argument within a clear framework is crucial to success in answering a 20-mark essay question. In a practical sense it is important to look for clues in the question itself. In this respect Question 05, by asking about one particular person, Parmenio, gave a clear route, the simplest way forward being to take his career stage by stage. Sensibly, this is what the majority of candidates did. Where some did less well, however, was in confining themselves to Parmenio's contribution to set battles, especially Granicus, without really looking at other factors such as this general's importance as a potential and actual focus for dissent. Relatively few candidates paid more than passing attention to Alexander's execution of both Philotas and Parmenio. The best answers, nonetheless, were well balanced and full of detail.

#### **Option B**

The city of Susa and the wife of Alexander, Roxanne, were very well known in Question 06 and 07, whereas very few candidates could answer Question 08 with any degree of accuracy.

Question 09 was well answered by many in the sense that they stuck closely to the question and produced a range of suggestions, for example Alexander's need to look to the future, on the one hand, and his desire to reward long service away from home of his fellow Macedonians.

The best answers to Question 10 were structured differently from those to Question 05. First of all, sensible candidates identified issues such as the wide spread of the areas conquered by Alexander. This was done more or less well, but some weaker essays stuck to battles and their immediate effects, thereby limiting what they could achieve in terms of evaluation. Weaker answers also failed to address the 'How successfully...?' part of the question. On the other hand, the best answers were both full and polished.

## **Section Two**

### **Option C**

The key to success in the synoptic questions was to create a strong central argument, ranging as widely as possible, supported by examples. In terms of knowledge most answers did well, especially in response to Question 11, where much detail was produced on Alexander in relation to the gods and religious practices, for example, Alexander's visit to the shrine of Zeus Ammon. However, too many candidates tended to narrate such 'facts' uncritically without looking at how to evaluate them. Some of those who did see the need for extended evaluation relegated 'belief in his own divinity' to the same level as other possible 'motives', as if they had prepared for a different question. It was necessary to consider 'other motives' for a good answer, but not at the expense of the main thrust of the question. Nonetheless, some excellent answers were received which took a good critical attitude to Arrian and Plutarch as sources.

### **Option D**

Confident appraisal of Arrian and Plutarch as sources was essential for success in Question 12. Most candidates showed some awareness of the differences between the genres used by Arrian and Plutarch, but fewer did well in identifying what the 'wider issues' might be.

### **Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.

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